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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates occupational characteristics influencing a household's migration propensity. The study was based on the premise that earlier studies have not done justice to the complexity of male/female influences on family migration. The hypothesis was that the geographical mobility of 'dual career' families will be determined by the career situations of both spouses, rather than the occupation of the household head (generally male). The sample consisted of 500 females who graduated from five British universities in 1965 and 1972. The method involved contacting the women by mail and directing them to respond to a questionnaire regarding family, migration, and employment history. The response rate was 36% for the 1965 cohort and 48% for the 1972 cohort. Preliminary findings indicated that, for married or cohabitating graduate women, moves due to the demands of husband's or partner's job represent the single most important cause of household migration, accounting for 44% and 45% of the moves made by 1965 and 1972 graduates respectively. Further, moves made specifically for respondents' own careers accounted for a mere 2% of moves made by the households represented in the 1965 cohort and 5% in the households of their 1972 counterparts. The conclusion is that this study lent considerable support to the idea of the contingent nature of much female mobility. Additional research is suggested on the impact of a household's geographic mobility on a wife's occupational status, i.e., the concentration of women in geographically transferable jobs such as nursing, teaching, and secretarial work. (DB)

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"THE GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY OF WOMEN IN "DUAL CAREER" HOUSEHOLDS: DETERMINANTS AND CONSEQUENCES"

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In recent years occupational or career pattern variables have come to be recognised as important influences on the migration propensity of an individual or household. (Keown 1971, Ladinsky 1967, Tarver 1964) However, a major shortcoming of much of the work on family migration, has been the tendency to automatically consider the occupation of the household head (generally male) as the relevant occupational characteristic influencing a household's migration propensity. (Leslie and Richardson 1961) In view of the dramatic increase in the participation of women (especially married women) in the labour force over the past two decades, a more realistic approach might start from the premise put forward by Rapoport and Rapoport (1971). They claim that the geographical mobility of 'dual career' families will be determined by the career situations of both spouses and not on one alone.

The study of dual career households and their migration behaviour lies on the borderland between geography, economics and sociology. There is now an extensive sociological literature on dual career families in Britain but remarkably little of this is concerned with their geographical mobility. Similarly, the literature on managerial mobility (Pahl and Pahl 1971) gives only passing recognition to this issue. This study therefore, has adopted a geographical perspective to focus on the problems of migration and locational decision making in dual career households. Such an approach can be seen as complementary to current migration research on career cycles and the migration patterns associated with them.

In the United States several studies have already attempted to look at the migration behaviour of dual career families. Long (1974) used Current Population Survey (C.P.S.) data to show that married men with working wives are less likely to move over long

distances than married men with non-working wives. Mincer (1978) using the same data source, suggested that the larger the wife's contribution to family earnings and the stronger her job attachment, the greater the deterrent effect on family mobility. In a study restricted to women's careers in academia, Marwell, Rosenfeld and Spilerman (1979) show that women in two-career families do have low rates of mobility and are differentially concentrated in large labour markets. In contrast Duncan and Perrucci (1976), using data from a national survey of college graduates, concluded that the presence of a working wife had no significant effect on household migration. Other relevant studies include those of Da Vanzo (1976), Sandell (1977) and Pickle (1979).

A major weakness of most of these studies and one which may help to explain the contradictory and inconclusive nature of their findings is that, rather than collecting their own data, they have tended to rely on existing sources. They have therefore been subject to the constraints imposed by these, with a consequent tendency to focus solely on the supposed link between working wives and household migration propensity. It is my view that these studies have not done justice to the complexity of this problem and that the neglect of a number of important issues has resulted in a rather unbalanced approach.

In Britain, the absence of any conveniently accessible longitudinal data sets like the C.P.S. in America, means that researchers must start with dual career households themselves in the collection of a suitable data set. In this study a decision was made to concentrate on graduate women for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was felt that they could be expected to exhibit a greater degree of commitment to their work. Several studies have shown that more highly educated women show higher and more continuous

rates of labour force participation. (Dahlstrom 1967) Consequently the choice of this group increased the chances of establishing contact with a significant proportion of working couples. Preliminary results from my survey provide some support for this line of reasoning. Of the married or cohabiting graduates in the sample, 75 per cent of the 1965 cohort and 64 per cent of the 1972 cohort were found to be in employment in 1980.

Secondly, it was postulated that graduate women were more likely to be engaged in 'careers', that is, those types of job which require a high degree of commitment and which have a continuous developmental character.

Thirdly, existing surveys of graduate women such as Ginzberg (1966) and Kelsall (1970), show that the majority marry graduate men, who are also likely to be engaged in 'careers'. This combination leads to a fairly high probability of some mobility options for the household. This is also borne out by my initial findings with respect to married or cohabiting graduates in the survey. For the 1965 and 1972 cohorts, 86 per cent and 81 per cent respectively, have partners with degree qualifications.

Finally, professional and managerial jobs undertaken by many graduate men and women tend to be more concentrated locationally and therefore less easily geographically transferable than many semi-skilled or lower grade non-manual jobs. The potential for locational conflict is therefore heightened.

Questionnaires were sent to a sample of 500 female graduates from five British universities. The sample was split between graduates of two years, 1965 and 1972. The 1965 cohort is designed to identify graduates who have perhaps returned to work after the childbearing interval and who may be in the process of re-establishing themselves in careers. The selection of these

two years may also serve to illustrate differences resulting from

the rapid social changes of recent years. In this context the views of one 1965 graduate are worth noting. She wrote,

> "I should be interested to know if my decision to concentrate on rearing my children rather than on trying to pursue or maintain a career is typical of graduates of my generation. (I suspect had I been born ten years later, I might have felt differently)".

The postal questionnaire was designed to collect a detailed family, migration and employment history from each graduate, commencing with the year of graduation. Additional information was elicited on a number of topics including attitudes to work, the reasons for household moves, the effects of moves related to husbands' or partners' jobs on the respondents' own career development and their attitudes to a hypothetical future move. Response rates varied considerably with both the year of graduation and particularly with the quality of an individual university's past student records. However, for the 1965 cohort a final response rate of 36 per cent was attained and for the 1972 cohort, 48 per cent. The quality of the completed questionnaires was very good with over 60 per cent of respondents adding supplementary qualitative information. It is hoped that these data will allow the exploration of a number of apparently neglected issues, in the study of migration in dual career households and thereby provide a sounder basis for future studies into this phenomenon.

Most notable among these neglected issues has been the lack of any serious attempt to research the impact of a household's geographic mobility on a wife's occupational status. If we accept the argument of Duncan and Perrucci (1976), that a wife's occupation has little or no effect on the migration propensity of the family and that her mobility if more frequently contingent on

her husband's occupational prospects, then more work needs to be directed at the negative effects of this tradition on female occupational attainment. Long (1974), Mincer (1978), and Sandell (1977), also seem to agree that a household's geographic mobility is usually detrimental to an employed wife's continued labour force participation. Moreover all to often, if a wife is successful in finding employment at her new destination, the new job is not commensurate with her training and experience. For example, Weissman and Paykel (1972) in a clinical study of moving and depression, found a number of educated and talented women in their sample who had held a multitude of jobs, often well below the level of their training.

Preliminary findings from my own survey certainly indicate that, for married or cohabiting graduate women, moves due to the demands of husband's or partner's job represent the single most important cause of household migration, accounting for 44 per cent and 45 per cent of the moves made by 1965 and 1972 graduates respectively. Comparable figures for 'housing reasons', which ranked second in importance, were only 22 per cent and 23 per cent. A further blow to any notions of equality is evidenced by the fact that moves made specifically for respondents' own careers accounted for a mere 2 per cent of moves made by the households of married or cohabiting 1965 graduates and 5 per cent in the households of their 1972 counterparts. These early findings therefore lend considerable support to the idea of the contingent nature of much female mobility.

When asked what they felt had been the overall effect of such 'tied' moves upon their own career development, 38 per cent of respondents in both years viewed them as 'damaging', compared with 29 per cent who claimed that these moves had had 'no effect'

and 20 per cent who felt that they could be seen as 'beneficial'. With regard to this latter group it is worth noting that several respondents were at pains to stress that the 'beneficial' effects of such moves had, in their cases, been entirely fortuitous.

It is hoped that a more detailed analysis of sequential occupational changes recorded on the employment profile may provide more rigorous and objective support for the latter findings. At this stage though it would be wrong to ignore some of the views expressed by respondents themselves with regard to this issue. A 1965 graduate, who passed up the chance of a good promotion to follow her husband, writes,

> "I find my present post (Primary school teacher) very unchallenging .....
> ....I feel that I am being underemployed, that my skills and experience are going to waste. I am a glorified child-minder - a very expensive one too",

In similar vein, a 1972 graduate recounted her experience,

> "I had a good chance of promotion to Scale 3 if I had stayed in my job in Northampton, but I got married and moved with my husband when he got a better job in Lowestoft. There were very few teaching vacancies available that I could fill and I had to accept a Scale 1 job."

In this context, a topic worthy of further investigation is the extent to which the expectation of becoming a 'tied' migrant is a possible influence on the occupational choice of many women. Might this help to explain the concentration of women in geographically transferable jobs like nursing, teaching and secretarial work?

Whilst the survey did not include a question which specifically addressed itself to this issue, a few respondents did indicate that

the geographical transferability of a job had influenced their occupational choice. One of these was a woman who had left teaching and who commented,

> "I am now training to do secretarial work where the job market, I hope, is more flexible, as I anticipate that my husband will have to change location in order to gain further promotion."

Moreover many respondents undoubtedly recognised the advantages of being in a job which was geographically transferable with comments like

> "I am qualified in an area (social work) where there are jobs available in most areas".

or

> "I feel that I am fairly lucky having chosen teaching as a career, as I can apply for jobs in whichever area we happen to be when the time comes".

Following Marwell, Rosenfeld and Spilerman (1979), it seems reasonable to suppose that dual career couples might prefer to locate in larger labour markets so as to maximize their opportunities of employment. Detailed analysis of my survey data will provide for each individual graduate, information on the size of labour market and employment status for every year since graduation, in order to test this hypothesis. Preliminary analysis of the data on place of residence and employment status for 1980 show that 51 per cent of 1965 graduates currently in dual career households and 71 per cent of their 1972 counterparts are found to reside in the largest fifteen British labour markets, that is, those with populations in excess of 500,000. If we compare these figures with those for survey graduates no longer in paid employment we

find that only 36 per cent of non-working 1965 graduates and 56 per cent of non-working 1972 graduates reside in one of these fifteen labour markets. These early results indicate, that for graduate women at least, households where the wife works are indeed more likely to be located in large labour markets than households with non-working wives.

Once again, further support for this hypothesis can be found among the comments made by individual respondents. A 1965 graduate, for example, wrote

> "We live in London because it offers a base from where we can both pursue careers and find good schools. At times other opportunities arose elsewhere but were rejected because nowhere offers the same richness of opportunities".

The survey has also discovered that locating in large labour markets is not the only possible solution to dual career dilemmas. An alternative may be the rise of the 'dual location' household, yet another phenomenon to have received scant attention in the existing literature. Whilst unlikely to become a permanent solution, it seems quite feasible that as a temporary measure, perhaps during the further education or training of one partner, its importance may well increase. A 1965 graduate outlined her slightly unconventional solution,

> "I work in Germany. My husband works in England. My child is at school in Germany. We all live together during school holidays, sometimes in England, sometimes in Germany".

The difficulties to be overcome for such an arrangement to work were highlighted by a 1972 graduate who wrote,

"Two university teachers are in a priveleged position. Because of flexible working hours and long vacations we can work in different places and maintain a relationship, albeit an unconventional and sometimes difficult one. Because of relatively high income levels we can manage 2 or "1½" households (a home and a bedsit style flat for me)".

These are just some of the largely neglected areas that this research is attempting to tackle. The findings as yet tend to be somewhat impressionistic, drawing heavily on much of the qualitative material collected in the first phase of the survey. It is hoped that the more detailed analysis of the mass of quantitative data also collected, which is now in progress, will serve to endorse these initial impressions. What the respondents themselves have illustrated very competently is the variety and complexity of the relevant issues, dilemmas and possible solutions that face many working couples.

It is also intended to initiate a second phase of this research to follow up a sample of respondents with a more detailed questionnaire on locational decision making and job search strategies in dual career households. A final phase plans to explore what appears to be totally uncharted territory, namely the attitudes of employers to the mobility problems of working couples. As one respondent asked angrily,

"Are employers aware enough that wives are not merely transferable appendages of their husbands?".

In conclusion, I feel that the justification for this comprehensive and, it may be argued, 'grass roots' approach to the issue of migration and the dual career household may be found in the words of Rapoport and Rapoport who remind us that

"the dual career family is no 'freak of nature' but a forerunner of things to come and therefore useful, as experiments of nature, to be studied and learned from."

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